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ABSTRACT

This paper constructs opposing views of leadership between what can be understood as mainstream American perspectives and those of selected Native Americans. American leadership values were deduced by examining selected aspects of the National Association of Secondary School Principals Assessment Center; selected Native American leadership values were derived from a total of 12 interviews with members of 6 tribes from the Great Plains and from participant observation. The research identified six themes that characterized Native American leadership: decentralization, recognition of the immanent value of all things, noninterference, self-deflection, a reduced sense of the importance of time, and a collectivist decision-making approach. (Contains 34 references.) (LMI)

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Contrasting American and Native American Views of Leadership

Miles T. Bryant

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Abstract

This paper constructs opposing views of leadership between what can be understood as mainstream American perspectives and the perspectives of selected Native Americans. American leadership values are deduced by examining selected aspects of the National Association of Secondary School Principal's Assessment Center; selected Native American leadership values are derived from interviews and field experiences with members of a number of tribes from the Great Plains.

Six themes were identified that characterized Native American leadership: decentralized leadership, the immanent value of all things; a value of non-interference, a self deflecting image projection, a reduced sense of the importance of time, and a collectivist decision making approach.

Introduction

Hallinger (1995) has noted that in studies of educational leadership, culture has been a missing variable. This is not ,entirely true. Hofstede, for example, has pursued an extensive research agenda exploring how culture influences such variables as 1) the manner in which individuals in a group handle variation in equality, 2) the degree to which individuals are dependent upon a group (collectivism vs. individualism), and 3) the manner in which individuals cope with uncertainty, and 4) the manner in which cultures assign gender roles (Hofstede, 1980;1991). As part of these studies, Hofstede examined the preference for managerial or leadership style. Consequently, Hofstede provides the field with an empirical base from which new cross cultural studies of leadership can advance.

Other scholars have examined the influence of culture on organizations and leadership. Schein (1985) has examined leadership and culture in some detail. Abu Saad (1995) explored how culture disposed Bedouin teachers to accept principal's managerial style. A wide variety of work by organizational consultants who help western businesses learn about other countries and their cultures exists. It is true, however, that there is much to learn about cultural understandings of leadership and that most administrative textbooks rarely touch upon the expectations that culture creates for leaders. Thus, Hallinger's criticism is well aimed. Lacking a more perceptive knowledge of the cultural base from which the leadership theories of educational administration spring, the teaching of leadership in the field tends to reify the topic and to place it beyond the

group of concepts that we regularly scrutinize for bias.

Hofstede suggests that culture is the "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1991, p.5). This is no earth moving observation for many anthropologists and observers of human culture have noted the impact of culture on the human behaviors and beliefs. It should be equally obvious that leadership is also rooted in culture. Thus, national culture as well as organizational culture can be expected to dictate leadership behaviors. When Mary Parker Follett suggested that one person should not give orders to another and that both should agree to take their orders from the situation, she was suggesting a role for culture in organizations (Follett in Metcalf and Urwick, 1940).

Some American Understandings of Leadership

In the field of educational administration, a theoretical knowledge base of leadership that is predominantly American has been erected over the past century. What are some of the characteristics of this American understanding of leadership? The following discussion suggests some aspects of a broad cultural definition.

If we grant culture a major role in defining the values underlying leadership, it is clear that what the field has defined as leadership is tinted by American culture. To search for this American leadership, consider the definitions of leadership found in the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Assessment Center material in which leadership is identified as one of the main administrative skills (Wendel, 1988). Looking to this NASSP Assessment Center for some cultural understandings

of leadership in America has a compelling logic. The criteria that were developed for the various skill areas of this assessment tool and the operationalization of the concepts into behavioral expression were constructed using surveys and interviews with practicing school administrators all over the country (Schmitt et al., 1982). An argument can be made that these subjects speak from the culture of educational administration and probably from the country as well.

The following analysis assumes some familiarity with the Assessment Center process. Basically, individuals who are designated as participants perform in a number of simulated exercises and, as they perform, they are watched and evaluated by assessors who are looking for evidence of specific predetermined behaviors. In many assessment centers, participants performed a simulated activity in which a group with no designated leader must solve a problem. As a group began its task and carried it forward, assessors looked for such behaviors as initiating action, leading the group toward a solution, and keeping the group on task--all behaviors defined as evidencing leadership (Wendel, 1988). This simulation was called a leaderless group exercise and has been used in many different training workshops in many different organizational settings.

From the leaderless group activity, one can infer certain cultural values about leadership. These are values that theorists hold to be desirable; they are not necessarily behaviors that are exhibited in practice. For example, an implicit assumption of the Assessment Center is that leadership is essential to a group's ability to accomplish a task. This is the first American cultural lesson about leadership. Leadership is important.

In fact, leadership is seen as vital and the success of an enterprise rests and falls according to the quality of leadership. The leader shoulders responsibility for the work and behavior of others and is expected to motivate others to do their work.

Leadership is also defined as moving the group toward the attainment of an objective. One aspect of American leadership is its fundamental instrumental quality. In the Assessment Center leadership means being focused on getting something accomplished. Thus, behaviors that help a group accomplish a task are identified as leadership behaviors.

A third cultural lesson about American leadership can be seen in the Assessment Center. Time is a precious commodity to American management theorists. When a participant notes that only so much time remains for a group to arrive at a solution to a group problem, this behavior is understood as indicative of a leadership ability. In America, there is an expecation that the leader will keep the larger picture of the organization in mind. This includes an awareness of external pressures with time serving as but one part of this awareness of the leader.

A fourth lesson about American leadership can be found in the behavior that helps others accomplish a task. American leadership encourages individual initiative. Though Fukuyama (1995) argued otherwise, Hofstede identified America as the nation that scored the highest on measures of individualism (Hoftstede, 1991). Thus, while the leader is essential to an organization, there is an understanding that others must be able to participate in decisions about how the organization will accomplish an obective. It is well accepted in America that these participation rights exist and that leaders do better when they empower those with whom they

work (White and Lippet, 1953; Stogdill and Coons, 1957; McGregor, 1960; Likert, 1961). Mary Parker Follet emphasized worker empowerment eighty years ago (Follett,1924). Leader and worker are to be understood as held together in a mutually supportive and interdependent relationship.

In spite of many lessons to the contrary of men and women who have had poor interpersonal skills or who have had trouble getting the job done and have still occupied major leadership roles, mainstream organizational and management theory in America has subscribed to the idea that leaders must have an appropriate mix of initiating, task oriented characteristics and consideration, people oriented characteristics. The leader must have a goal, a focus, a vision, an objective and must make certain that people in the organization attend to this end product. Simultaneously, the leader must care about the people who will move the organization toward this end product. These two faces of leadership appear frequently in the leadership literature.

In the Ohio State studies researchers found the consideration and initiating structures to be the twin pillars of leadership (Shartle & Stogdill, 1953; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Stogdill, 1948). Researchers at Michigan State labeled these same leadership attributes as that of task-oriented behaviors and relationship oriented behavior (Likert, 1961, 1967). An interest in different mixes of these two leadership attributes has continued to characterize the leadership research. Proponents of empowering leadership (Foster, 1986; Reitzug, 1994), for example, advocate behaviors that resemble those promulgated in the consideration structures of the Ohio State studies.

Other scholars who have researched leadership behavior from a

western perspective have continued to focus on the leader as a key in organizational performance. Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) outlined the ability of the leader to change subordinates by maximizing the talents of each individual; this was to be done through a leadership posture sensitive to the needs of others. Deming held that it was critical for leaders to develop their human resources (Deming, 1992). Others have suggested that leadership occupies a central role in organizational performance: that organizations need leaders who exhibit profound ethical knowledge and principled behavior (Covey, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992); that true leaders have the capacitity to serve others (Greenleaf, 1977); that leaders must possess the ability to design systems (Senge, 1990); and that leaders must have an ability to bring about de-centralized, organic, and intuitive organizations (Depree, 1992; Wheatley, 1995). In all of these scholarly explorations, culture is at work both inspiring and constraining conceptions of leadership. Yet, our scholarly literature has not interpreted our expectations of leaders as culturally derivative.

The Issue for Educational Administration

"The export of ideas to people in other countries without regard for the values context in which these ideas were developed .....is not only limited to politics, but can also be observed in the domains of education, and in particular, management and organization (Hofstede, 1991, p. 41). Clearly one issue of great importance to those who seek to help other countries develop their administrative and organizational systems is the match between western conceptions of leadership and local culture. How is leadership understood by other cultures? Are there places where

western cultural values naturally conflict with the requirements of local culture? How can local cultural expectations of leadership be accomodated by imported theories ? What aspects of leadership transcend cultural boundaries? These important questions can only be answered by cross-cultural comparisons.

The remainder of this paper reports on an exploration of how leadership is understood from the varied perspectives of members of six different Native American tribes. While Native Americans abide within the embrace of the larger American culture, many tribes retain a tribal culture that is quite separate from the majority one. Thus, Native American understandings of leadership provide one useful contrast to usual American conceptions of leadership.

The Study

This study was undertaken as a class research project by eight graduate students and their instructor. The simple question guiding the members of this class was: How do selected Native American individuals understand leadership?

To address this question, members of the class identified and interviewed Native Americans. Sometimes these interviews were conducted by all in a group setting. Sometimes individual members of the class conducted the interviews on their own. Some data were gathered through participant observation.

Individual Native Americans who were knowledgable about their tribal culture were chosen to be interviewed. Some of these individuals were actively involved in trying to restore their tribal culture; some were

assimilated into the white majority culture but had a deep historic interest in their tribe's historic cultural expression. Participants came from the tribes indicated in Table 1.

Table 1
Tribal Affiliation of Participants

Tribe	Number of Participants Interviewed
Northern Ponca	2
Taos Pueblo	1
Winebago	1
Omaha	3
Lakota	4
Dakota	1
Total	12

Over a period of time from March to July of 1995, twelve interviews were conducted. Participants were located through convenience sampling. Individuals who held positions that permitted the reseachers to come into contact with them and whose names surfaced through various sources were contacted to request participation. Each interview lasted approximately an hour. Six men were interviewed; six women were interviewed.

With one exception, these were formal interviews. Several basic questions were asked of all participants but no set schedule of questions was used. It was felt that each individual came to the interview from very different circumstances and that it was best to try to understand the context from which the individual described his or her understandings of leadership. At some point during the interview all participants were asked to describe how they understood Native American leadership and to give examples of behaviors that illustrated that concept of leadership.

In the case of most participants, considerable care was taken to create an interview environment that would signal to the participant that the researcher(s) were interested in their opinions and did not want them to try to speak for any other individual or group. Several of the interviews were conducted on an Indian reservation. Notes were not taken in all interviews. In several instances, the practice of taking out paper and pencil and recording the dialogue about leadership was inappropriate. One advantage for the researchers was that because in most instances a number of us participated in the interview, a number of memories were able to reconstruct what had been said. A disadvantage is that we were often unable to utilize the actual words of our subjects.

Data were also gathered about Lakota concepts of leadership by spending three days helping one traditional tribal leader prepare for a Sundance, one of the important religious ceremonies of the Lakota. We were not cultural anthropologists. We stayed for only a short time in the culture. In living and working with these members of a reservation community who themselves were immersed in traditional Lakota ways, we had an opportunity to observe first hand how different leaders behaved as they interacted with others. By working side by side, informal discussions about traditional ways was possible. By participating in one of the Lakota religious ceremonies, we were able to appreciate at an emotional level the cultural differences between our American culture and this more traditional one.

The resulting data provided much diverse information. While more interviews need to be conducted in order to determine if there are certain themes about leadership that are general to Native American culture or

even to particular tribes, the following ideas appeared in sufficient numbers of interviews to warrant a preliminary analysis. The data were coded and themes were developed after several iterations and reductions of categories. The themes we identified have been reviewed by our subjects for veracity and have been authenticated through this process.

Analysis of Interview Data

A Caveat

In Native American cultures on the Great Plains, a guiding value that we experienced frequently was that of modesty. One does not presume to speak for others. Thus, as we interviewed different members of different tribes, we typically heard a person state that they would not speak about leadership for others. One in particular frequently began his observations with the phrase, "I know my traditions. I can not speak for others." We would have our words tempered by this same value that hesitates to speak for others.

Yet to honor this value as we write about Native American conceptions of leadership poses a methodological problem. How does a scholar construct meaning from qualitative interview data if that same scholar must refrain from speaking for others? "Speaking for others" by constructing meaning is at the very heart of qualitative research. To read the transcripts of interviews and isolate themes in those interviews is, in fact, to speak for another.

Native leaders with whom we interacted provided a route around this tortuous dilemma. One goes ahead and speaks, but first one asks forgiveness for the mistakes and misinterpretations that one will

inevitably make. We begin our discussion of leadership with such a request for forgiveness. The themes that we have identified are not intended to be representative of how all Native Americans understand leadership. Rather, these themes surfaced as we analyzed and discussed what the participants in our study said.

Leadership Themes

From the data gathered six thematic areas emerged. These are as follows:

Decentralized Leadership

Immanent Value of All Things

Non-Interference

Self-Deflecting Image Projection

Time

Collectivist Decision-Making

Each of these is discussed below. Because this study is exploratory in nature, no attempt is made to quantify these data and arrange these themes in any particular priority. Nor are these themes necessarily of equal strength. We saw elements of all of these leadership themes in the interviews with almost all the Native Americans with whom we spoke.

Decentralized Leadership

Clark and Clark note that they have learned that "leaders must emerge and play a role at every level of the organization if that organization is to use the full energy of all followers in achieving objectives" (Clark and Clark, 1990, p. 71). This conception of leadership is

found everywhere in American culture. From Frederick Taylor to the Robert Young and his leadership secrets of Attila the Hun, the idea that every organization or human group must have a person in charge predominates. Leadership theory in American culture has been wedded to this basic idea. This idea is the simple one that in every organization there must be final authority, a final decision-maker.

One can take this notion of a centralized authority in Western culture to Moses in the Bible, guiding the Israelites through the desert after their flight from Egypt. Confronted with ever more complex administrative tasks, Moses is in despair. His father-in-law, Jethro, provides him with one of our early examples of centralized administration. Break up your group into sub-units with a person in charge of thousands, another in charge of hundreds, and another in charge of tens. You (Moses) handle only the very difficult cases.

In contemporary leadership a similar practice applies. Control and authority have to be vested in a system that eventually leads to one source of decision-making power. Americans commonly use the phrase the "buck stops here" to capture his fundamental aspect of western leadership. Thus, for western culture, success is attributed to good leadership and failure to poor leadership.

But, Native Americans spoke of a different kind of leadership. It was a leadership that is de-centralized. Within a tribal context, every person has a role to play. Each person's role is important to the whole. No other person can make the exact same contribution. The total contribution is an organic whole that can only be understood over life cycles. One Lakota Sioux member suggested to us that one of his jobs was to put on a Sun Dance,

but not to interfere with the work of sweatlodge leaders whose work, while integral to the successful Sun Dance, was separate and special. Each has a role. No single entity supervises other individual entities in some hierarchical fashion.

This understanding of one's relationship to the whole as de-centralized seemed significantly different than those common in western culture. Resnick (1994) provided a powerful image of decentralized leadership. He likened it to a flock of swallows. Such a flock swoops and veres across the sky, all moving together yet never having the same leaders. Belasco and Stayer (1993) captured this same concept of de-centralized leadership with their metaphor of the flock of geese. In such a flock, leadership changes repeatedly. DePree used the Native American watercarrier as a metaphor for decentralized leadership. The water carrier is the person who does what needs to be done when it needs to be done irregardless of role authority. DePree cited an inscripton next to a sculpture of a water carrier at his company: "The tribal watercarrier in this corporation is a symbol of the essential nature of all jobs, our interdependence, the identify of ownership....."(DePree, 1994, p. 65). Wheatley, 1992) has written a whole book about the necessity of a paradigm shift from centralized to de-centralized leadership.

Our interviews with Native Americans suggest that within their collective perspectives on leadership are some very basic ideas of de-centralization that resemble what contemporary theorists are proclaiming as necessary for new conceptions of management and leadership.

Imannent Value

In a Lakota sweatlodge, the phrase "mitakuye oyas'in" has much meaning. An English translation is rendered as "for all my relatives." In the spiritual cosmology of the Lakota, all things are relatations. People, animals, trees, rocks--every creature and thing is a part of the universe and has a spirit. And therefore it has value and requires understanding. Booke Medicine Eagle noted that this phrase, "mitakuye oyas'in" is used to represent the full circle of sacred life and this circle includes "not only two legged relatives of all colors and persuasions but also all the peoples with four legs, those with wings and fins, the green standing (tree and plant) people, the mineral and stone people, those that live within and crawl upon the earth, everything both known and unknown, for we are one" (Brooke Medicine Eagle, 1991).

Rob Patterson (1995) refers to this as the idea of immanent value. All that is in the universe has a purpose and a place and a worth. The Native Americans with whom we spoke often referred to rocks or animals or other races as relatives and as animate objects. It took a Native American from the Taos Pueblo to make us see how this concept of immanent value influences Native American leadership. He pointed out that a Native American does not appoint himself or herself to such a position. One grows into such a position and is gradually accepted into such a position. The foundation of respect for a Native American leader rests on that persons knowledge of how things work. That knowledge in turn is based on a person forever being a student of the trees and the rocks and the river. There are lessons everywhere. The wise and respected person will be he or she who can help the rest of us understand those lessons. Knowledge and

an ability to interpret the events of the world, to understand the immanent value of all things, were important aspects of leadership in the minds of most of those with whom we spoke.

The differences between the Native American leaders inclination to place value on all things and western conceptions of leadership for the leader to create organizational values are subtle. Consider how leadership was described in a very popular book from the early 1980s. Following Burns (1978) description of the transformational leader, Peters and Waterman linked this type of leader to successful organizations. In these organizations, leadership builds on "man's need for meaning, leadership that creates institutional purpose" (Peters and Waterman, 1982, p. 82). The transforming leader is concerned with minutiae...he is concerned with the tricks of the pedagoge, the mentor, the linguist--the mores successfully to become the value shaper, the examplar, the maker of meaning" (Peters and Waterman, 1982, p. 82).

The notion that the transforming leader of western culture is a pedagoge and a mentor provides one useful contrast. In the Native American context, the leader is a student. Through that student's own learning, others learn. That learning is voluntary. It is never ending. One Native American said that a leader might know 40% of all there is to know about his culture. And that might be 99% more than I know. He would still keep trying to learn more.

For western leaders, the need to maximize resources leads to a value structure that judges, that values some things more than others. For the Native American leaders, there is an acceptance of the inherent worth of all relations.

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Responsibility for Others

In a typical American public school district of any size, staff development will be a major task of the administrative staff. Usually a great variety of resources are brought to the teachers and staff of a district. Teachers and staff are then expected to educate themselves by participating in seminars and classes and workshops. This model of staff development presents individuals with information that they are expected to learn. Some person has decided what knowledge is needed and has brought it to the learner (Byrne and Bryant, 1995; Miller, Lord, & Dorney, 1994). Such administrative behavior betrays an attitude of responsibility for others. Leaders are responsible for others. There is great variety in how this basic responsibility for others is understood by leaders. For some it is a paternalistic obligation; for others it is a caring and nurturing expression; and still for others it is a belief that others are deficient and must be improved. But no matter how the feeling of responsibility for others is expressed, western leadership accepts this as one of its charges, i.e. to be responsible for followers or fellow workers or subordinates.

From our interviews with Native Americans, we would conclude that the Native American leader may have a responsibility for the welfare of the collective (the family, the tribe, the people) just as the superintendent in a large school district has. But that responsibility appears to be exercised differently. From one Lakota woman came the notion of non-interference, the term she used to discuss this issue of responsibility for others. She noted that the Native American leader might believe that another person needs something, that an intervention is necessary, that

teachers would benefit from a particular kind of staff development. But that native leader would be unlikely to take any action without permission from the individual needing help. Consequently, the native leader would not assume a responsibility for others. Rather, the native leader might hope that a person will come to desired levels of understanding.

Wax and Wax wrote that "conservative Indians do not subscribe to a Protestant ethic's conception of the human character as a phenomenon that may (and ought to) be modeled and changed" (Wax and Wax, and Dumont, 1989, p. 20). The value is the value of non-intervention, one that has many implications for leadership behaviors. For example, how would a value of non-intervention shape attitudes toward personnel evaluation or program evaluation? How would a value of non-intervention impact strategic planning?

And, what does a value of non-intervention say about trust. As could be deduced from the earlier discussion of western research in leadership, trust is one of the factors that has concerned leaders. How does one secure the trust of others? Francis Fukuyama in a recent book called Trust claims the warp and woof of western society is being shredded by a lack of trust among people(Fukuyama, 1995). Amatai Etzioni's communitarian movement (Etzioni, 1993) seeks to develop community structures that produce trust among members.

Perhaps one of the precursors to trust is a willingness not to interfere in how others construct their understandings. Interference implies a lack of trust. It suggests that someone must do something for someone else because otherwise some important act will not be done. Interference suggests that one party is superordinate to another in terms

of establishing an agenda for action. Non-interference, on the other hand, may suggest trust. Certainly, when one person is granted or assumes the authority to design changes in another person, there is a hierarchical relationship between those two parties.

One Lakota member told us, this value of non-interference does not mean ignoring the needs of others. Displeasure with behaviors or positions can be communicated in many ways. Nor does it mean that help or assistance is not provided. The Lakota value holds with the old folk adage that "you can lead a horse to water but you can not make him drink." This is similar to what Hofstede suggested about collectivist cultures where members control other not through internal pressure but through external societal pressures or norms(Hofstede, 1980). Thus, there is a felt sense of responsibility for others, but that sense of responsibility is expressed in a different way in Lakota society. Pressure to conform and to change in acceptable ways comes not from an individual but from the culture around the individual. This has strong implications for organizational cultures.

Image Projection

Western leaders have a tendency to see themselves as strategic players seeking to advance their own purposes. One of the baldest examinations of this aspect of leadership was Machiavelli's The Prince. Here the leader was exhorted to be a wise prince who understood the need to be merciless at times. The prince must be aware of the forces that swirl about him and be able to manipulate those forces to personal gain. One of the long honored thoughts of politics is that if one would exert influence

one must be around long enough to do so. From an American perspective, one of the behaviors that help leaders remain in their roles has to do with how the manipulate their image. Leaders are expected to look like leaders in American culture. They are expected to make more money, have more well appointed offices, wear more expensive clothes, and be more visible in public meetings. Leaders are expected to look for opportunities to display their talents and to do so when these opportunities are located. They are expected to seek advanced education and to volunteer their skills in community organizations. American culture accept these kinds of self-aggrandizing behaviors as appropriate leader behavior whereas in another culture such behavior might appear to be too self-centered.

And, in some Native American cultures there is what amounts to an imperative requiring the leader not to stand out, not to seek advancement, and not to manipulate image in self-aggrandizing ways. When one is singled out as a leader, one can accept and feel honored at that recognition. But if one actively promotes one's self, that action is likely to result in disrespect. Thus, leaders in Native American cultural events are not always obvious. An example of this value in action would be the behavior of singers and drummers at powwows. Men will sit in a circle about a large drum. No single individual will appear as a leader. One must look very carefully for the person in the group that is the lead person.

Another example of this value in action is seen in the story that one Lakota spiritual leader told us. Several years ago he was speaking with a woman who praised him for the wonderful things that had happened to her husband as a result of his participation in a Sun Dance. The Lakota spiritual leader replied to her that he had done nothing; it was all done by

that tree out there. And he pointed to the tree that is at the center of the Sun Dance ceremonial grounds. The practice of deflecting praise to something or someone else appeared in several interviews. As in de-centralized systems, the Native American approach to image seemed to be one that downplays the importance of an individual. This contrasts with American leadership expectations which tend to single leaders out for special attention and privilege. Or put slightly differently, of course there is an image that is created, but it is one of humility and self-deprecation.

Time

Western culture requires that leadership be oriented toward the future. We have many, many examples of this. Strategic plans, mission statements, information systems, forecasting are all common to top organizational leadership. All are oriented toward the future, either toward a future goal or to analyzing possible trends. Reducing future uncertainty through an ability to predict events is very much the job of top leadership in modern organizations. In fact, the way in which the members of a culture live with or seek to avoid future uncertainty is a major dimension one can use to distinguish leadership behavior (Hofstede, 1980). In some cultures, the leader is expected to help others reduce future uncertainty. In other cultures, this concern with the future is muted.

The Native Americans with whom we spoke described a different leadership in terms of time orientation. For the Native American leader there was a deep connection to the present. Often this connection was linked with an ability to see and comprehend the meaning of natural events. The traditional Native American leader has a strong spiritual

component that seeks to understand the lessons provided by daily experience.

For us, coming from a white culture, patience was a necessary virtue. In our interviews with Native Americans during the formal part of the class, time was not mentioned as an important aspect of leadership. Based on our field experiences, we would have to conclude that time is very much of a significant factor. Following a pre-determined schedule was unimportant and not done. There were things that had to occur at particular parts of a day, but these were dictated by the nature of the events, not by the leadership. For example, when the group slaughtered a buffalo, the animal had to be butchered immediately or the meat would spoil. The sweatlodge services had to happen at particular times based on ritual obligations. Generally, however, leaders organized work according in no particular way and one set off to do something when everyone was ready and able to do it.

Thus, time as a major factor in leadership was absent. There was no sense of using one's hours efficiently to make the most of them.

Decision-Making

Organizations, in western management theory, are tools to get work done (Weber, 1947; Scott, 1981). We understand organizations as instruments. A recent example of this instrumental orientation toward goals is contained in a popular book by Belasco and Stayer called Flight of the Buffalo. "Lead the journey so others follow," is one of the chapter headings. And the first step in getting others to follow is that of determining direction (Belasco and Stayer, 1993, p. 87). Central to

organizational efficacy is an identification of purpose, or mission, of objective. Thus, American organizational decision making is frequently portrayed as a rational process in which an attempt is made to maximize goal attainment while minimizing the expenditure of resources. Goal clarity is an essential part of this rational process.

Karl Wieck suggested a far more complicated world. Goals become important as a means to justify past behaviors (Weick, 1969), not just as a way to justify future behavior. James March suggested that "a description that assumes that goals come first and action comes later is frequently radically wrong" (March and Olsen, 1976, p. 72). They were proposing a different explanatory perspective to that perspective that views the goal as central to organizational and leader behavior. In the organizational world that March, Olsen and Wieck described, decisions were as dependent upon who was involved in making the decisions and what the circumstances were that surrounded the decision context as they were oriented toward an organizational goal. This diffuse decision making process resembles group decision making in the Native American context.

A number of the Native Americans with whom we spoke described the traditional decision making context as a circle. When a group or a tribe needed to make an important decision, the method of arriving at that decision was through talk. All participated. Not all necessarily talked. But all listened. Participants were arranged in a circle, a common metaphor for many Native Americans. Decisions were arrived at when the talk had exhausted the issue and a direction for action was established.

In American organizations, decision can often be represented in a circular fashion, as in Diagram A below. In this configuration, it is the

leader in the center who fields all communication and provides a focal point.

Figure A About Here

(Disjunctive Decision Making)

March and Olsen argued that the greater the interdependency of individual action, the greater the likelihood of (or justification for) collective decisions (March and Olsen, 1976, p. 42). In Figure A there is the likelihood of some interdependency, but this potential is muted by the focus of all participants on the person in the center. Participants B,C,D,E,F, and G all direct their communication at Person A in the center. Academic departments at universities frequently exhibit this decision making process. It is labeled disjunctive in Figure A not as a pejorative, but as a way of capturing the relationships in this decision making approach; it disjoins the participants from each other. Thus, while this mode of decision making is participatory in that each party participates, it lacks the interactiveness that is likely to exist in a more collectivist decision making process.

What we understood about Native American decision making is more accurately reflected in Figure B. In this schematic, there is no focal point. Participants B,C,D,E,F, and G all speak to each other. It is a circle but no one person serves as the hub. We label this Conjunctive Decision Making because it brings together the participants and removes all hierarchical relationships. In terms of participation rights, all are equal and have equal access to information.

Figure B About Here

(Conjunctive Decision Making)

In this circle there are likely to be individuals who play particular roles. One may be known for her stories, another may have a particularly acute sense of history, a third may serve as the spokesperson for a particular cause. In terms of decision making, the differences between Figure A and Figure B are many. The latter is probably extremely inefficient if there is a time limit; essential pieces of information may be missed; no clear decision may be made. Native American history abounds in stories of tribal treaties that were entered into by one party and ignored by others. In Figure A, the interpretation of the group's information is left up to one person at the center who must then be responsible for the final decision. In this model there is a place where accountability rests whereas in Figure B accountability rests with all.

These two decision making models are by no means meant to exhaust the possibilities. Rather, they are intended to suggest some very deep differences in how decision making is approached in American and Native American leadership contexts

Conclusion

This paper presents work in progress. There are many cultural aspects of Native American leadership that remain to be uncovered. The themes discussed above are those that have emerged in preliminary research and will be expanded as more data are gathered. Different tribal

perspectives need to be explored. A rich literature by Native American authors exists and frequently contains information that suggests how Native Americans view leadership differently. For example, Paula Gunn Allen argued that in traditional times, women's leadership was a major component in tribal governance, a form of governance she labeled gynocracy (Allen, 1992, p.30-42).

Furthermore, the use of existing theory on cross characteristics needs to be incorporated into the leadership research design. For example, the four dimensions of culture that constrain leadership expectations identified by Hofstede provide a useful heuristic for further explorations. The distribution of power and prestige, the degree to which a society is individualistic or collectivistic, the manner in which the members of a society deal with future uncertainty, and the degree to which a society is dominated by men as opposed to women are all major thematic factors that Hofstede has identified as important in how leadership appears within a cultural context (Hofstede, 1980). These factors have implications for specific organizations as well and might well help us distinguish some of the elements that separate good schools from bad schools.

Finally, knowing more about Native American leadership values may provide us with alternative concepts that help us understand leadership across all cultures. Contrasting American ways of conceiving of leadership and its related components like decision making with Native American ways should help scholars better define and depict the cultural factors that influence leadership.

Approaching Native American culture is unsettling. Simple values that we take for granted are sometimes turned upside down. Nepotism is a

good example. In western culture, and particularly in rational organizational culture, the notion of doing things that benefit family and relatives is seen as unethical. In some states there are even laws forbidding nepotism. Yet, in Native American cultures, taking care of family and relatives is one of the first obligations of a leader. Nepotism becomes a positive value. Giving money with the expectation that some future benefit will eventually be bestowed on the giver is another example of a behavior acceptable in one culture's political context and unacceptable in the others. Favoring a modest image above one that enhances self appears naive in an American cultural context. It is precisely these kinds of contrasts that we need in order distinguish the new leadership practices that will be necessary as we develop new organizations.

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Figure A
Disjunctive Decision Making

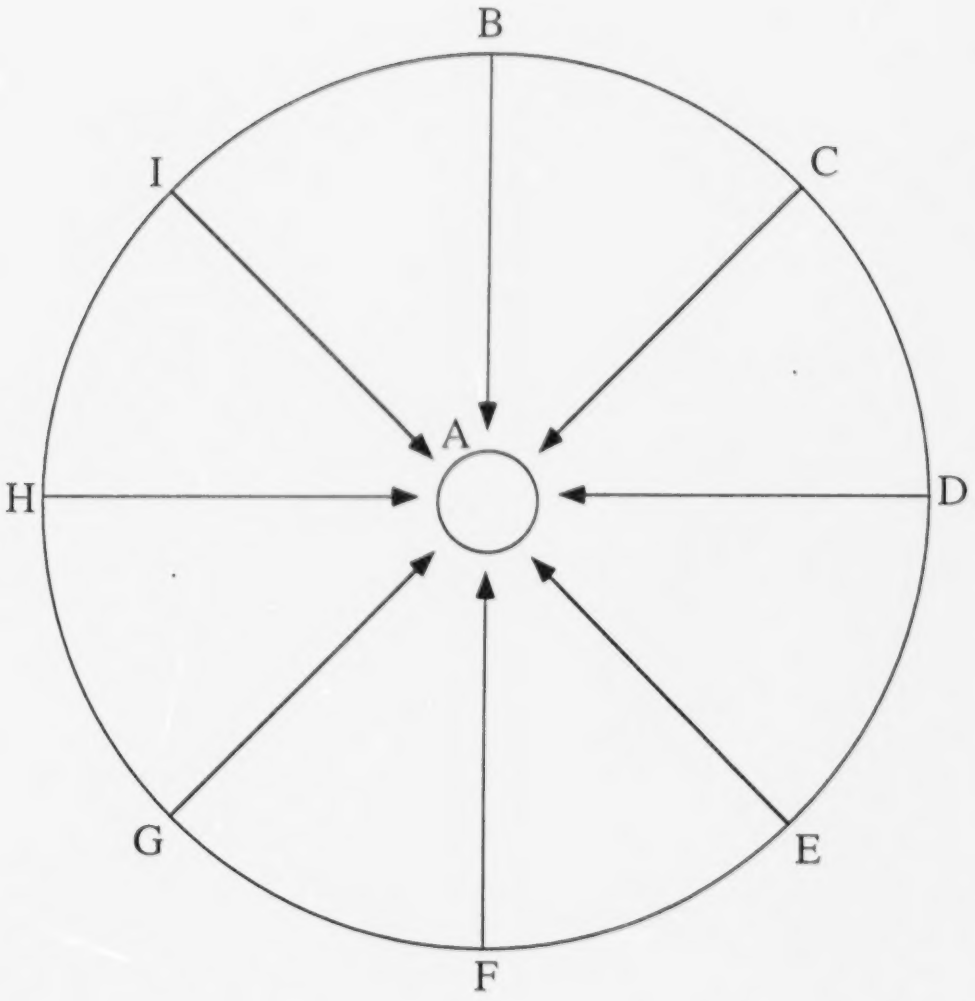

Figure B
Conjunctive Decision Making